Clinton Challenges NRA to Donate Funds

Give Money Raised by Letter to Slain Officers' Families, President Says

By Ann Devroy
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President Clinton took another swipe at the National Rifle Association yesterday, challenging the group to "put their money where their mouth is" by taking funds raised through a controversial mailing and donating them to families of police officers killed in the line of duty.

It was the third Clinton shot at the group since it sent out a fund-raising letter calling law enforcement officers "jack-booted government thugs." The letter caused former president George Bush to resign his lifetime NRA membership, prompted a wave of protest even among traditional NRA defenders and resulted in an NRA apology to law enforcement officers this week.

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>
> — President Clinton

Clinton and the NRA are longtime antagonists, and the president couldn't pass up another opportunity as the group's national convention opened.

Surrounded by uniformed officers invited to the White House for crime discussions, Clinton said: "If the NRA's apology is sincere, what they ought to do is put their money where their mouth is. They ought to give up the ill-gotten gains from the bogus fund-raising letter. . . . They ought to turn that money over to the organization that helps the families of police officers who died in the line of duty."

"They made the money by attacking the police, they admitted they did the wrong thing, they ought to give the money up," the president said.

Clinton, who has fought the anti-gun control forces of the NRA throughout his presidency, added, "I hope the NRA knows by now that anyone who pretends that police officers are the enemy is only giving aid and comfort to criminals who are really the enemy."

Some law enforcement officials who attended the event said the NRA was not sincere about its apology, and Clinton noted that NRA Executive Vice President Wayne LaPierre said the letter would raise more than $1 million.

Clinton also repeated his pledge to oppose NRA efforts to overturn repeal of the Brady bill that puts restrictions on handgun purchases, and a ban on assault weapons. He said he would also resist any effort to turn back last year's legislation to put 100,000 new police officers on the streets.

"If Congress gives in to the political pressure to do this and repeals any of these measures, I will veto them in a heartbeat," Clinton said.